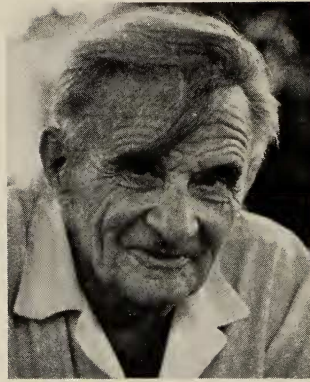


## OBITUARY



EUGENE S. MILJANOWSKI (1908–1976)

Dr. Eugene S. [Yevgeniy Semionovitch] Miljanowski died of a heart attack on 29 May 1976 in his home in Sukhumi, where he spent the last 43 years of his life. He was one of the most remarkable persons in Soviet lepidopterology and was widely known for his important contributions to the faunistic study and zoogeographic interpretation of the macrolepidoptera of the Caucasus, especially in the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Eugene S. Miljanowski was born on 12 January 1908 in Warsaw, into the family of a Russian officer. In 1916 his family settled in Poltava (Ukraine), where he took his first steps in his profession and life-long passion—entomology. It is here he met Alexandr S. Danilevski, and the ensuing friendship, first based on a common interest in butterflies and moths, persisted till Danilevski's death in 1969 (see A. Diakonoff 1970, *J. Lepid. Soc.* 24: 70–72). After finishing high school and Horticultural Technical School in 1927, he was appointed in the Poltava Agricultural Experiment Station as an assistant with the special task to study the macrolepidopteran fauna of the Poltava district. In 1930–1933 he co-operated with the Lubny Medical and Etheric-Oil Plant Experiment Station. From 1933 on, his permanent residence spot was Sukhumi, where he was appointed as an assistant and then advanced to the head position of the Plant Protection Division, Sukhumi Etheric-Oil Plants Research Station. He worked there until his retirement in 1976, several months before his death. Starting in 1946 he was pluralistically employed at the Natural History Division, Abkhazian Lore Museum, where his efforts resulted in a remarkable increase in the collections and scientific level of the staff activity.

Because of strong myopia he was not fit for military service and was unable to take a direct part in World War II. At this time he studied the possible use of etheric oils and parts of etheric plants for wound cures. This research resulted in obtaining some original, therapeutically active preparations for wound microflora control and supporting quick healing of wounds. For efforts in this field he was awarded the medals "For Defence of Caucasus" (1945) and "For Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War" (1947).

His decision to leave Ukraine for Caucasus he explained by the fact that Western Caucasus and its Black Sea Coast in particular were then unstudied by lepidopterists so he found this area far more worthy of study and discovery-promising. Alone, sometimes in company with visiting entomologists, or as a member of botanical, zoo-

logical and geological expeditions he collected in practically all accessible—and often not so accessible—parts of Abkhazia, from the swampy lowlands to the high montane areas. He was really tireless in field work. During the weeks, after days of hard climbing and walking he was still able to spend nights collecting with a light trap, having only an hour or two of drowsiness with head on sleeve. In the field he ignored comfort and his luggage was limited to a minimal *omnia mea mecum porto*. The most important results of these year-to-year excursions was the development of the most complete regional collection of butterflies and moths that ever existed in Caucasus. This was bequeathed to the Zoological Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Leningrad.

Miljanowski published more than 50 scientific articles on the macrolepidoptera of Abkhazia and other parts of the Caucasus, and more than one hundred papers (including popular articles) on plant protection, nature conservation (with special reference to insect protection), insect behavior and ecology, botany, herpetology, batrachology, and speleology. For the past 10 years he was President of the Speleology Section at the Sukhumi Tourist Club. He was a man with a wide range of interests in different aspects of human activity. He was an expert in Ancient Greek mythology, and often recited his own hexameters on recent affairs where Hellenistic persons were employed. His second passion was classic music, especially opera. He collected many hundreds of records, and I often heard him singing his favorite parts of operas in the field. He was always ready to teach. As a man of generous soul he was easy to contact, and his home was always filled with people.

Superficially Miljanowski represented a naturalist of an older generation professing the Staudinger-Seitz taxonomic doctrine. At the same time, under this "Tory" mask, a man of unordinary approach and world vision was covered. One example will depict his original way of thinking. A puzzling peculiarity of the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus and the Crimea as a habitat is their relative faunal wretchedness, though these areas with their 'subtropical' climate would seem to be richer in Lepidoptera than the adjoining mountains and plains of Ciscaucasia. Contrary to recognized theory of geological-geographical isolation of N. J. Kuznetsov (1929), Miljanowski proved the ecological background of this phenomenon. The reason appeared to be surprisingly simple: these coastal areas cannot be colonized by boreal species because they are too warm for their hibernation and winter diapause (the lack of freezing); on the other hand, relatively low winter temperatures prevent colonization of the coast by southern species (Miljanowski 1956, *Zool. Journ. (Moscow)* 35: 1170–1176).

A central position in his scientific work occupies "Macrolepidoptera of Abkhazia: Ecology and Economic Importance" which he defended in 1961 as a doctoral thesis in Tbilisi Agricultural Institute. Together with more recent publications, this work promises to be a concise guide to the butterflies and moths of Abkhazia and adjoining areas of Georgia and Russia, and it may be hoped that in the near future it will be prepared for publication. It will be the best possible monument to the man whose knowledge, advice and suggestions were widely used by his numerous pupils, colleagues, and friends. His name will never be omitted in the Caucasian lepidopterology and he will persist in our memory.

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